

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2020

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

I write to express the urgent need for clear guidance on a streamlined process for and dedicated resources for outreach to individuals without Internet access who qualify for Economic Impact Payments enacted in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. I am specifically concerned about individuals who do not file federal income tax returns or receive other federal benefits or assistance. While I appreciate that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued guidance for these non-filing taxpayers to receive their Economic Impact Payments, such guidance presents many logistical barriers and lack awareness among the general public, severely limiting their goal of providing needed relief to the most vulnerable.

The “simplified return filing procedure” contained in the IRS Rev. Proc. 2020-28 for non-filers eligible for the payments is anything but simple. The 12-page procedure listed on the IRS website contains detailed, difficult-to-follow instructions, rather than an FAQ or user-friendly guide. The IRS requires a Form 1040 or a Form 1040-SR to be completed in a specific way with specified entries on the lines on the form, leaving significant room for human error, which could prevent or delay receipt of payment. The procedure is particularly confusing for taxpayers who have a zero adjusted gross income (AGI) and are required to enter \$1.00 in the lines for taxable interest, total income and AGI. Libraries, community centers, and other places where individuals generally obtain paper IRS forms during tax time are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in sharp contrast to individuals who can access the “Non-Filer: Enter Payment Info Here” portal on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to input information.

The nonpartisan Pew Research Center estimates 10% of all American adults do not use or have access to the Internet. Approximately 29% of American adults with household incomes below \$30,000 a year don’t own a smartphone, and 46% do not have a traditional computer.¹ These are Americans for whom Economic Impact Payments are of utmost importance as they struggle to keep finances afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2008 financial crisis, “at least 3.4 million people who were eligible [for a stimulus payment] failed to file the necessary tax return in order to get it, according to Treasury Department data. And that was for a smaller payment than the one on offer now — and a smaller group of eligible citizens.”² We must learn from this and commit to a robust outreach program and streamlined, expeditious methods for these individuals to receive the payments that are rightly theirs.

¹ Monica Anderson and Madhumitha Kumar, “Digital divide persists even as lower-income Americans make gains in tech adoption” Pew Research Center. May 7, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/07/digital-divide-persists-even-as-lower-income-americans-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/>

² Ron Lieber and Alan Rappeport, “Needy will Face Hurdles to Coronavirus Stimulus,” The New York Times. April 1, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/business/coronavirus-stimulus-social-security.html>

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It is unfair and unjust that those without Internet access face substantially more hurdles to receive their Economic Impact Payments. I applaud the actions that the IRS and Congress have already taken to help Social Security and Veterans' Administration beneficiaries. It is imperative to see this process through for those without Internet access to ensure every American receives the direct assistance to which they are entitled. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Higgins", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Higgins
Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Bradley S. Schneider
Thomas R. Suozzi
John B. Larson
Earl Blumenauer
Jimmy Panetta
Linda T. Sanchez
Terri A. Sewell
Jimmy Gomez
Judy Chu